

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH REHABILITATION SERVICES

Office of the Director



From the Director

March 23, 2005

This edition of *From the Director* marks my second month as acting director, and there have been several promising, and a few saddening, developments.

First, the population at Oak Hill continues to decline based on a combination of vigorous step-down efforts (kudos to **Pat Clark** who is ably chairing DYRS' step-down meetings) and transfers to YSC. As of Saturday, Oak Hill's population had declined to 209 on March 19, down from a high of 245 on February 27. **Jose DeArteaga** and **Ron Staton** have been particularly helpful in stepping down and diverting youth this month.

That was *before* all but 5 committed girls were transferred out of Unit 6 to YSC, reducing Oak Hill's population to 194 by Sunday, March 20. A whole lot of DYRS staff deserve high praise for the way that transfer was handled. They worked with the girls to emotionally prepare them for what they knew would be a difficult transition, and hosted two wonderful events, a good-bye party and an open house. Congratulations on the fine work of **Charlotte Richardson, Sharon White, Charlene Killens, Willa Ward-Shumate, Morena Lancaster, Shuketha Johnson, Angela McCollum, Bola Olukolu-Irefin, Michael Spaulding, Oliver Parker** and **Michael Gamboa**.

Five girls now remain at Oak Hill and we are committed to moving those girls into placement as quickly as possible so we are able to close Unit 6 as part of our efforts to downsize Oak Hill. By March 26, the 20 boys now detained at the Modular II unit in Oak Hill will be moved to YSC, reducing Oak Hill's population below 180, where it has

not been for years. This will allow us to close the decrepit Modular II, built as a “temporary” building in the early ‘90’s.

By next months’ *From the Director*, I hope to be able to announce the start-up of a new evening reporting center and the creation of several new in-home family service programs for our youth in collaboration with DMH. Stay tuned, and keep up the good work.

Announcements

I join DYRS staff in offering our condolences to **Rev. Cole** and **Latonya Coard** on the loss of their fathers in March, and to the family of **Dr. David Bridgeport**, Oak Hill’s dedicated dentist, who passed away on March 12. Dr. Bridgeport’s loss will be sorely felt by the young people at Oak Hill.

DYRS welcomes **Michael Watts**, our newly hired Chief of Staff, and **Marc Schindler**, our new General Counsel. Michael comes to us from the Department of Employment Services, where he won high praise for reforming the Department’s Youth Opportunity (YO) Program. Marc joins us from his job as a staff attorney at Youth Law Center, one of the nation’s preeminent children’s rights organizations. They join **Brenda Emanuel**, DYRS’ COO, and I, in making up our Executive Management Team.

DYRS also welcomes **Mary Phillips**, detailed over from the Department of Mental Health, to be a Special Assistant working on diversion and other special projects. When it is fully established, Mary will be assigned to work on our ReFam (Return to Families) unit.

We also welcome to our ranks, albeit temporarily, **Barbara Roberson**, detailed over to DYRS from the Chief Financial Officer. We have a large and growing backlog of employment requests that have been delayed at least partly because DYRS does not have a departmental CFO to handle such requests. We know you all need help, and wanted to let you know that help is on the way.

On March 22, Vincent Schiraldi, Michael Watts, Marc Schindler and Brenda Emanuel met with union representatives of FOP, AFGE, AFSCME, and the Doctor’s Council for a

very productive meeting and sharing of issues. You should all contact your union representatives to learn more about those meetings.

Finally, I am proud to announce the formation of the **Defunct Rules Task Force** at DYRS. The task force will be chaired by Jose DeArteaga and will contain membership from each part of DYRS represented by the above unions, as well as a parent and a youth. The committee's important charge will be to review suggestions from staff, parents, and youth of rules that are governing DYRS that have outlived their usefulness. We will set up a mechanism for all staff, youth, and parents to nominate rules for abolition that have become counterproductive to our mission of treating young people the way they would like their own treated (OK, they can create a few new rules if that helps move things along as well, but for every rule created, they have to get rid of an old, defunct one). The committee will then forward to me recommendations for one rule to be abolished every two weeks, and I will buy lunch for the person whose recommendation is chosen.

March Success Stories?

In March, a 16-year-old pregnant girl (**DJ**) was scheduled to be transferred from Riverside Acute Care Hospital to confinement at Oak Hill. Until recently, the process was that children were transferred to Oak Hill after their court ordered inpatient assessments and evaluations. Now the object is to assure that, when appropriate, a child is discharged from a hospital *directly* to wrap around services and supported home placements, rather than being automatically exposed to the negative impact of incarceration. In the case of DJ, DYRS intervened with her family, coordinated community based services, partnered with the hospital, the HMO and the Department of Mental Health to create a plan that addressed *both* the youth's prenatal and behavioral health needs. Rather than being locked up at Oak Hill, this non-violent, pregnant teen was discharged from Riverside straight into her family's care. DYRS is currently providing her and her family diversion services and intensive supervision. After DYRS made a presentation at her status hearing in DC Superior Court, her community plan was sanctioned by the Judge and the Probation Officer. DYRS has provided supervision and has transported her to medical appointments and is pleased to report that she has complied with all components of her plan. It is early in her recovery, but to date, the Judge has been very pleased with her progress. In fact, the relationship this Judge has with the young lady has been an enormous tool and the Judge has been willing to participate with

several scheduled status hearings. The Prosecutor, Defense Attorney and the Therapist have been equally willing to repeatedly schedule time for these status hearings to maintain this family progress.

FEBRUARY'S ALMOST CASTASTROPHIC STORY TURNS INTO MARCH SUCCESS STORY!! – **"BABY TALK"**

At the end of February, a pregnant 15-year-old female, who was eight months pregnant, was sent to OakHill for placement. This trip was diverted by medical to YSC due to her late state of pregnancy. At YSC this resident received the utmost support with the help of medical, social services and the Youth Corrections Officers. Immediate efforts were made and arrangements were put in place for her transfer to St. Anne's. This included two to three trips from YSC in order to accommodate her clinical appointments and to help in emotionally stabilizing this resident during her transition. We kept in constant touch with the resident as her caregivers, during her stay at St Anne's. On Saturday, February 19 at 2:38 PM, the resident was induced at Washington Hospital Center and successfully gave birth to a healthy baby girl weighing 8 pounds, 1.4 ounces. The Physician Assistant, **Hassan Turay** accompanied by **Tausha Cham**, the YSC nurse visited this resident and her newborn at the hospital on Monday, March 21, with **Dr. Corder** checking in. During the visit the medical staff made arrangements for transportation and a car seat for the newborn's subsequent discharge to St Anne's. Mother and child were released from hospital on the same day escorted by Tausha and **Mr. Bridges** of CBI. As of this morning they are both doing well at St Anne's. The mother is also reported to be in a charming mood and in good spirits. Her first Post – Partum visit is scheduled for Thursday March 24, 2005 at 1:00 p.m. at Children's Hospital. The medical staff will continue its effort to keep the mother and child well and happy, and will follow up with necessary arrangements with transportation to the appointments and back to St. Anne's. We are currently assisting in the transfer of two other pregnant and committed girls from Oak Hill to St Anne's.

[?] Interested in submitting a success story to *From the Director*? Please e-mail it to Lydia McDaniel (lydia.mcdaniel@dc.gov) for next month's report.

Vincent Schiraldi
Acting Director